

I'm A Little Bit Soft by Carerra_os

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Summary:

Day 12 Soda

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There is the soft hum of the fridge and freezer section in the space, music crackling over the speakers and the faint chatter of people. Steve ignores the call of “Pretty boy?” sure he is hallucinating it again. He gets hallucinations a lot right before and during, it is not always a teasing Billy Hargrove’s voice that fills his ears but since he spent all of last year plastered to Steve’s back they have been recurring frequently.

I'm A Little Bit Soft

Author's Note:

Day Twelve Soda from the Harringrove April Prompts

Title is really just how I was feeling when I wrote this.

I'm A Little Bit Soft

Steve is tired, bone weary by the time he leaves the mall, it is pushing midnight, the mall had closed at nine on account of it being a weeknight but Steve lost at rock paper scissors and had to close and clean up tonight. It does not normally take so long but then again ten minutes after Robin leaves and fifteen before the shop officially closes someone does not usually come in and projectile vomit all over the place. The kid is banned for life, between trying not to heave and avoiding being caught in the crossfire Steve had snapped a polaroid and added it to the ' **DO NOT SERVE!** ' board behind the counter.

It took him hours to hopefully get it all up, he is pretty sure he did but he is too tired for one last check through. He feels gross, his shitty uniform, feeling itchy and too tight the way it always does after a long shift and though he has not found any he is sure he has puke on him somewhere. All he can smell is the harsh chemicals he used to clean up agitating his nose and making him nauseous, he hopes that is all anyone else can smell too as he pulls into the Gas and Sip.

Steve is hungry and the only other place open is the dinner and he does not have the energy for that, for sitting there being seen in his stupid uniform outside of work. He does not have the energy for making idle chit chat with the wait staff or even putting his order into words. His eyes have been aching for a while now, blurry in a

telling way and he knows he does not have a lot of time before the headache really hits. It has been coming for a few days now and Steve hates them but the waiting for it to fully bloom is the worst part, once it hits he knows how to handle it, if you can call locking yourself in a cool dark room until it passes handling it.

He would ignore his hunger and head right home but he has a craving, he needs a soda or he is sure he is just going to keel over and die, so he might as well get food while he is here too. Steve rubs at his achy neck yawning as he pulls into the parking lot, gravel shifting loudly, his is not the only car in the lot but Steve hardly pays them any mind, outside of an internal cringe at being seen in his sailor uniform.

There is the soft hum of the fridge and freezer section in the space, music crackling over the speakers and the faint chatter of people. Steve ignores the call of "Pretty boy?" sure he is hallucinating it again. He gets hallucinations a lot right before and during, it is not always a teasing Billy Hargrove's voice that fills his ears but since he spent all of last year plastered to Steve's back they have been recurring frequently. With the hazy glow around everything it is easy to guess he is hearing things too as he heads to the back cooler where he knows the sodas will be. His stomach is starting to turn and none of the food on the shelves looks good, the thought of grabbing any of it makes him feel like he might be the one to start projectile vomiting.

He rubs at his neck as he gets to the coolers, it is hard to focus, hard to tell what exactly he is looking at and he just prays they have not rearranged the order of the sodas as he reaches in and grabs a bottle of what he hopes is coke. Steve groans as his head suddenly pounds, barely managing to keep his hand on the bottle as he stumbles forward a bit, no matter how many times he goes through this it always manages to take him a little by surprise, he is never fully prepared.

Steve pulls himself together as best he can, righting himself and

forcing one foot in front of the other, head down squinting at the ground as he moves slowly to the front counter. His stomach is rolling as he waits in line behind someone smelling heavily of bourbon, it only makes his nausea worse, the scent too much and Steve has to bring his arm up. He smells like cleaning solvents though and it is not really helping but he tucks his nose into the crook of his elbow where the smell is not as strong, where it smells more like skin and nothing more and that helps a little.

He is thankful when the man finishes up and leaves the scent following him out the door as Steve shuffles up to the counter finally dropping his arm as he puts the soda down gently. "Pretty boy" Steve groans there it is again, he really does not want to deal with hearing things right now, he just wants to get his wallet out and pay so he can leave.

A hand in front of his face has him jerking back, making the throbbing in his head worse and his wallet hits the floor. Steve blinks at the offending person, something familiar about them but his vision is not clearing up, if anything it is getting worse going from hazy edges around everything to black spots and he was really hoping to get home before that started up. The longer he is here the worse it is getting. Steve falls to his knees, barely feels the pain of hitting the ground hard through the throbbing in his head, hand reaching out blindly for his wallet and coming up empty.

Someone touches his shoulder and Steve gives a little jerk, his spotty vision getting worse with the movement. "Let me help." Steve wants to reply, really he does but the most he can get out is a guttural noise words failing him. Then someone is suddenly picking him up off the ground pulling him up to standing and Steve lets out a pitiful whine he does not want to be up, up hurts, god he just wants to lay down somewhere cool and dark.

There is more talking but Steve tunes it out with a groan that hurts too and then there is something heavy draped over his head, soft and warm, a familiar scent clinging to it that his mind cannot pick out

right now, all he can really focus on is that it is blessedly dark under here. Steve mumbles discontent as he is being forced to move again, dragging his feet but going where he is being led, he just wants to go home and try and sleep through some of this awful.

He is pushed into a seated position in a car he thinks, if the loud noise of the door falling shut making him flinch and bloom new hurt is any indication. There is the feel of vibrations, the loud roar of an engine as something cool lands in his hand, oh it is his soda. Some little pills land in his other hand and Steve takes them without even a second thought, they could be anything, he does not care as long as they help. It is a little awkward bringing the soda up to his mouth, the sweet scent of it tickling his nose as he pulls it up under the thing draped over him, sipping from it before chugging it down.

The car is moving and it makes his stomach lurch a little but the drive is smooth and Steve knows whoever it is must be intentionally avoiding potholes because the roads in this town are full of them. There is the soft sound of music, something heavy, something Steve never listens to but the volume is turned down so low that it does not add to his hurt. Steve leans to the side, presses against the door, can feel the coolness of the glass just starting to seep through the window as he leans against it and he is able to lull for a short while.

He is broken out of his relative peace, the throb coming to the forefront once again when someone drags him up and out of the car, he whines again, jerks away trying to escape, he does not want to be up. He does not appreciate the pat down he receives, a hand digging into one of his pockets and Steve does not realize what they are after until he hears the jingle of his keys. Home, yeah Steve wants to be here, good.

They do not leave him as familiar but unusual as they are, talking softly and Steve manages to catch the last word, or maybe the first he cannot be sure. "Room" Steve is pretty sure they are still in the entryway, they have not moved that far, the whole place smells faintly of his mother's perfume, the scent of it trapped here from

years and years of her walking through a pump before walking out the door. Steve points to where he thinks the stairs are and then he is being pulled and he does not like it one bit, trying to puddle down to the floor until suddenly he is weightless and it is not helping his head as he is lifted up completely off the ground.

There is some twisting and turning, movements not his own and he grumbles his discontent, cannot manage more than that as he is. The world sort of shifts and it makes his head throb harder, it makes his stomach swoop and the thing blocking out the light falls away with a dull thud but then he is on something soft, familiar, his bed, the scent of the detergent fresh, he did laundry this morning before work sure he would not be up to it for the next few days. He buries his nose in the pillow smelling faintly like heat and something Steve categorizes as chicken soup thanks to the feathers inside, under the scent of the detergent.

He can still smell the chemicals over that though, his clothes scratchy and he wants them off, off! So he starts squirming out of them trying to keep his face buried in his pillow to avoid the low light of the room in an attempt to block out the pain. There is talking again, he thinks, or maybe he has hallucinated this whole thing to get himself home, he cannot be sure but he thinks the hands that still him, that start helping him remove the clothes, he thinks they feel real. It really does not matter he is just happy to be out of his clothes, he still feels kind of gross but he will take whatever relief he can get with the least amount of movement and even though a shower would be heavenly he does not have it in him to try and make it there, he would probably just collapse in the bottom of the tub anyhow.

Steve lets out a little shocked gasp at a cool wet touch over his skin, it drags over him, a soft wet cloth the touch not scratchy meaning it is one of his mother's fancy guest towels that he is not supposed to use but he does not really care, content to lay there and be cleaned up. It is strange having someone essentially wash him while he lays there with his face buried in the pillows, complaining when they make him roll to his back, but a hand keeps the pillow over his face, letting him keep the darkness.

There is that voice again and Steve tries to pay attention as they give his shoulder a gentle shake trying to get his attention. "Close your eyes." He is pretty sure they are not open but he does make sure to squeeze them tight just in case. The pillow is lifted and fresh air is nice but there is some light trying to filter through his eyelids making it brighter in his head than he would like, until a gentle hand falls over his eyes before that cool cloth is wiping down his face and Steve just relaxes into it. His head still throbs painfully, no relief to be found for that but he can almost ignore it as his other discomforts are removed. Steve drifts despite the throbbing blissful sleep finding him faster than it normally does as he is tucked in.

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Steve is in and out over the next thirty hours or so, is vaguely aware of the presence, familiar voice, glimpses of blond curls he thinks, eyes too blurry to define any actual features. He is fed, despite his desire not to be, small light portions of food and given plenty of water, neither of which he would normally get for himself, he is lucky if he remembers to grab a bottle of water before he trudged down the stairs into the basement. He is cleaner than he usually is after an episode, wearing soft pajamas now after having the sweat washed from his body several times he thinks.

Steve slowly rises, careful of his movements and speed, no need to make the pain flare up again now that it has passed. He wants to lay back down, still feeling so exhausted but he is pretty sure he has work today, he definitely has work at some point and he needs to figure out when. He slowly moves to the bathroom and brushes his teeth, feeling better for it and sucking down a few gulps of water from his cupped hands, always thirsty after an attack even with the extra water this time.

There is a scent in the air, something cooking maybe and the sound of things moving around that has him frowning, who is here. Who took care of him, why? Steve descends the stairs slowly taking a

break half way down feeling too tired and worried about slipping. He sits there listening to the low music and the clanging, a curse here and there all adding to his confusion.

Steve makes it to the kitchen and he is pretty sure he died, that he did not in fact get his soda and the craving killed him because this cannot possibly be real. Maybe he crashed his car on the way to the gas station and this is a coma dream? Maybe these headaches are an indicator of a real problem and he should go see a doctor? What other explanation could there be for Billy Hargrove, dream hunter to be in his kitchen, shirtless, smoke hanging from his lips, hair pulled up in a messy bun, apron tied loosely around his waist as he makes pancakes that do not smell half bad.

“Am I dreaming?” Steve asks, making Billy turn and notice him there, pinning him under blue eyes and suddenly he kind of wishes he had the energy to fix his hair when he had been in the bathroom earlier.

“You dream of me often pretty boy?” Billy asks with a cheshire grin, looking unfairly attractive in the frilly apron that is technically his mother’s but that she has never once worn. Steve licks over his lips, feels a flush rising, he does not want to answer that just gives a shrug, eyes cutting away and spotting the soda on the table, he wants it. “It’s for you?” Steve cuts his eyes back up to Billy head cocked and Billy waves his hand at the soda.

Billy looks uncomfortable as Steve keeps staring at him, mouth twisted and when he blows out air from his pursed lips it blows the curls up that are hanging in his face. “My mom used to get bad headaches, would have days like you just did, sometimes it was short only a couple of hours but usually longer than even yours lasted, she always said the caffeine and sugar in a coke helped her feel less off after an attack.” Billy shrugs, turning back to the stove and Steve is pretty sure he is trying to hide the sadness on his face but he does not bring it up he knows better than to poke at Billy, has a little scar in his hairline, a lesson learned.

Instead he goes for the coke on the table, the first sip is kind of gross with his minty mouth but after a few sips it starts to taste right, sweet and crisp over his tongue and he feels a little better as he sits there. He watches Billy and he does not know why he is surprised when Billy brings a plate of pancakes over for him, it is obvious Billy is the person who has been taking care of him over these last few days. Billy settles down across from him drinking coffee, cigarette put out in an ashtray on the counter and Steve watches him dig in for a long moment before starting in on his own plate.

Steve makes it through half of his pancakes before he cannot eat anymore, it is always a little hard to eat a full meal in one setting. After an attack Steve usually just ends up doing a lot of snacking on those days. Billy finishes his own plate eyeing Steve's plate and he pushes it forward, nodding his head when Billy gives him a questioning look, hesitating for half a second before digging in.

"Why did you help me out?" Steve asks, of all the people he thought he might find down here Billy had absolutely been at the bottom of that list. He was pretty sure he hated him after that November night. Billy had mostly left him alone outside of basketball but Steve could always feel him staring, feel his eyes boring into him. He was pretty sure the guy hated him but if that were true why is he here helping him out.

"Told you my mom used to get headaches like yours," Billy says around his last bite tongue curling around his syrupy fork and Steve tries not to get caught staring, is pretty sure he is unsuccessful by the wink Billy shoots him." and I figured I owed you, yah know for that night." Steve is confused, brow pinched up because he knows he came off as less than upstanding, knows how it must have looked in hindsight. "Saw the thing in the fridge when I woke up and Max isn't as good at keeping secrets as she likes to pretend." Oh, Steve just nods. "I wouldn't mind some more information."

"You'll have to ask one of the party, I can barely keep up with it, they say a lot of shit I don't understand." Steve says around a yawn the

soda helped but he is still really tired.

“Guess I’ll do that sometime.” Billy shrugs standing and taking both of their plates as Steve sets his head down on the table with the intent to take a nap right there.

He must for a moment because the next thing he knows Billy is shaking him awake with a disapproving look. “You’re going to get a kink in your neck, move your ass to the couch at least.” He does not actually give Steve an option hauling him up and dragging him to the living room.

Steve expects to be pushed onto the couch and left and he is pushed down but Billy drapes a blanket over him and grabs the remote. He shifts Steve around like he does not weigh a thing and sits down, Steve’s head in his lap. Steve is tense until a hand drops to his hair and starts carding through it, no one has done that since Nancy and she did not do it very often.

Steve melts like butter into the touch making a content noise when Billy digs his fingers into his scalp a little harder before going light again, careful and soothing. “God do you want to move in?” Steve blurts out, brain a muddy mess of thoughts. All of them center around Billy and his gentle care, of being taken care of, something no one has done for him in a very long time.

Billy chuckles above him teasing “How about you take me to dinner first?”

Steve cracks an eye open shifting a little so he can look up at Billy’s laughing face, knows this might be a huge mistake but he is muddled enough to not think it over too hard. “Yeah anywhere you want, there’s a nice little Italian restaurant over in the city, if you like that kind of thing.” Steve rambles a little, snapping his mouth shut as soon as he can finally will it, cheeks heating but his are not the only ones.

Billy's cheeks are pink too and it makes his freckles stand out as he stares down at Steve with something undefinable before a slow smile pulls at his lips. "Yeah pretty boy, I'm into that."

Steve's own smile makes his cheeks hurt as he nods "It's a date then." Steve twists back toward the television, melting all over again when Billy's hand goes back to stroking his hair, drifting off to a rerun of the Golden Girls.

-End

Author's Note:

<https://ghostofjellyfishforgotten.tumblr.com/>